Nation

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October 12, 2018

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Cover photo by
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Editorial

Keeping warm **the Cree way**

by Will Nicholls

Winter is coming, and I'm not talking about the phrase made famous by the Game of Thrones series. There are pictures of geese flying south early from all over Eeyou Istchee. Most Cree know (or should know) that this is one of the signs that we'll see winter arriving earlier than expected. While French may be known for being the language of love, francophones don't know what the Cree know about keeping warm. It is one of the reasons why our population growth is much higher than it is in the rest of Quebec…

But it's not only the methods of population growth that the Cree utilize to keep warm. Knowing what to wear and what to do when the cold hits is vital. I remember a story my uncles used to tell me about my great-grandfather William Matoush, whom I'm proud to be named after. When he would take them out to check their trapline, he would give the boys a piece of rabbitskin with the fur still attached to carry.

Though he was asked what it was for, he wouldn't tell them. One day it was extremely cold, and the temperature was dropping even more so he told the boys to take out the piece of rabbitskin fur he had them carry. Then he told them to put it around their privates.

"We have to protect the next generation," he explained.

William said he waited to tell them its purpose because they would have used it before it was really needed, and it wouldn't have been as effective. Many of the older Cree to this day will still carry around a piece of rabbit fur. Another lesson Cree Elders taught the youth was that if your hands were cold to put ptarmigan feathers in their mitts or gloves to keep warm. Remember not to use the bloody feathers though, my uncle Don MacLeod told me with a chuckle.

But while there are more than just those examples, a few don't need a physical component. A kind word or a "sweet nothing" can get the heart racing, causing you to blush to the tips of your ears. Being embarrassed, called to task or angered in some way can also do the trick. Which brings us back to a Game of Thrones moment, Cree-style.

Romeo Saganash is the NDP MP for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou and the party's Critic for Indigenous and Northern Affairs. He recently heated things up in Parliament with an inflammatory question to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau: "Why doesn't the Prime Minister just say the truth and tell Indigenous Peoples he doesn't give a fuck about their rights."

Saganash admits it was planned and that he was advised not to do it, but he felt he had no choice. Other words just weren't strong enough to get the point across that while Trudeau talks the talk when it comes to Indigenous issues he doesn't walk the walk.

We contacted the Prime Minister's Office for a response. Press Secretary Matt Pascuzzo replied, "The Prime Minister is fully committed a nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations, the Métis Nation and Inuit, based on recognition of rights, trust, respect, cooperation and partnership. We are committed to reconciliation and that is why we established the MMIW inquiry, committed to implementing the UNDRIP as well as the TRC calls to action. Additionally, our government has made unprecedented investments in Indigenous communities to ensure that all Indigenous people can live in strong, healthy communities."

Perhaps listening to hot air could be another way to keep warm. It can certainly get people hot under the collar. Maybe that's how the Liberals are helping First Nations.

As many Cree have said, winter may be coming early but with all the political heat warmth won't be a problem for some. Just in case, though, find some rabbit fur because a cold shoulder or two could affect the reconciliation thermostat.

Correction

The Nation apologizes for misspelling Grand Chief Abel Bosum's name on the cover of September 28 issue. We regret the error and sincerely hope we will be *able* to avoid repeating the mistake.

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News

Reading results **rise**

Literacy summer camp becoming part of the **community fabric**

by Amy German | Photo provided by Melanie Valcin

It has been six years since Frontier College began running summer literacy camps for elementary school students in Eeyou Istchee to prevent summer learning loss. While much remains the same, much has changed – for the better.

Mélanie Valcin, the regional director for Quebec, Nunavut and Atlantic Canada, says that Frontier College sees its relationship with the Cree Nation as "six years and counting." The college is planning on returning next summer to work with children on not only preventing summer learning loss, but also to improve their ability, enjoyment and confidence as readers.

"The goal remains the same as in year one and that is to reduce summer learning loss. But a lot of things have changed in the past six years and for the most part, for the good. For example, over the years we have been able to hire more local camp counselors," explained Valcin.

Making the project sustainable locally has been an objective all along. In the first year, the camps had 15 local employees, now the team includes 22 locals, said Valcin.

However, local hires are not the only increase; after six years, community engagement has also increased significantly. In the first year each camp had about one community member involved in facilitating an activity with the children, this summer there were about five per community.

*"It's a safe space where students can get creative, ask questions, make new friends outside of their grade levels, and bring **learning outside of the classroom**"*

- Jade Adams, Cree School Board high school teacher

"Usually these people come to the camp to facilitate some kind of activity, be it cultural or traditional or simply to read or be a storyteller to the children. This is important for us to see that the camp has become part of the fabric of the summers in these communities and that community members want to share their time, knowledge and expertise with the campers. This has enriched the camp experience so much," said Valcin.

Valcin said another important change has been the amount of parental engagement, by getting parents to participate in a family literacy night or having them come in and read to the children during the day. In year one, about 36 parents throughout the region – about four or five per community – participated. This summer saw 210 parents involved in activities at the camps, demonstrating just how much the relationship has strengthened over the years.

Jade Adams is a Waswanipi high school teacher who works with the camps in the summer. She is now seeing some of the participants entering high school, and says that the impact of the camp is quite evident.

"I see how it changes the way children see reading, writing and learning," said Adams. "It's a safe space where students can get creative, ask questions, make new friends outside of their grade levels, and bring learning outside of the classroom. Working as a high school teacher, many of the students I know who have attended camp in the past, seek out extracurricular activities, enjoy school, and have good social relationships. Even if the camps can't always boost reading levels in only four weeks, they build self-confidence and foster positive attitudes toward learning."

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by Jamie Pashagumskum

Tornado **alley**

Biggest natural disaster since 1998 ice storm hits Ottawa

The Cree School Board's Post Secondary Student Services (CSB PSSS) is implementing new safety protocols and procedures to better prepare their students after the six tornadoes that ravaged the Ottawa-Gatineau region last month.

Environment Canada reported three tornadoes, most likely EF-1 tornadoes with wind speeds between 135-175 kms per hour, touched down on the Quebec side. The first tornado touched down around 3:30 pm west of Mont-Laurier followed by the others at Val-des-Bois and north of Otter Lake.

A more powerful EF-3 tornado touched down near Dunrobin, Ontario, before crossing the river to Gatineau, destroying hundreds of homes and knocking out power. Another EF-1 tornado hit Calabogie while an EF-2 tornado hit Ottawa between Greenbank and Hunt Club south of Algonquin College. That one knocked out power to the Merivale Ottawa hydro station, leaving much of the city without power and in the dark.

Darryl Diamond of the CSB PSSS said they never lost power at their Gatineau office on Rue Montcalm, and were barely aware of the devastation that was going on throughout the city.

"The building faces south. So we didn't have a visual of how bad that system appeared," Diamond said. "It just looked like a usual thunderstorm passing through."

At the time of the incident, Diamond was hosting an open house for the Ottawa-Gatineau CSB PSSS students. He said they received tornado warnings but didn't think they were that serious so the supper event went on as planned.

During the supper Diamond kept a close watch on the developing weather system and was prepared to lead his group to the basement of the building if the tornado hit, but the need never arose.

Priscilla Bosum, a second-year student at Algonquin College in Museum Studies, experienced the natural disaster in a much more personal way.

"It almost looked like a carpet being rolled, but it was a black cloud that was coming. It unrolled and unrolled then it became so dark on our street and it started to rain like crazy. I've never seen that kind of rain before," she said.

Bosum and her roommate were cooking supper for their children at the time and didn't take the tornado warnings seriously. They went about their normal routine because they had experienced such warnings in the past but nothing had actually happened.

The power flickered once while they were cooking and then later went out for good, leaving them without electricity for the next 17 hours.

After supper, Bosum was still unaware that a tornado had hit the city so she went for a ride around the block and that's when her messages started coming in from friends and family asking her if she was okay and informing her of the events that took place.

They sent her videos of the tornado through social media and told her that Philemen Wright High School, where some of her kids attend, was also hit.

That night the kids were frightened but her and her family were fine during the power outage. They made it a game and brought out their Goose Break supplies such as candles and flashlights and pretended like they were in the bush.

Although it was a traumatic experience for Bosum and her family, she was inspired by the sense of community that arose in the aftermath of the disaster. She said that the Gatineau Cree community came together to help out those in need, where people with power were opening up their homes for those without.

"Everyone reaches out for each other in times like this," she said.

Diamond was thankful that no one was hurt and that the loss of hydro was the only effect of the storm for the Crees living in the area. The CSB PSSS reimbursed their students for all perishable food items that they lost during the power outage.

For the future Diamond said that he will be updating the CSB PSSS emergency preparedness plan so that they will be better able to locate their students and more quickly verify their safety in times of emergency.

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Dancing with the ancestors

Waskaganish's **'forbidden'** powwow a resounding success

by Maïtée Labrecque-Saganash

Photos by André Lemelin & Ndiamon

It was a windy and rainy evening when we arrived in Waskaganish on the first evening of the community's much-contested powwow September 21-23. The winds were so strong they knocked the powwow tent down. Besides worrying about the weather, there were concerns about the security of the dancers, which discouraged many to travel to Waskaganish. "It's not going to be the same as other powwows," one dancer said.

Many dancers felt they had to be there to support organizers Susan Esau, Virginia Wabano and the powwow committee who had decided to go ahead with the event despite the community's negative referendum result. People from across Eeyou Istchee traveled to Waskaganish.

As news of the "forbidden" powwow was heard beyond our borders, it brought supporters from the other side of the bay, uniting Crees from Ontario and Quebec around the same cause. Beautiful when you think how damaged the bond with our Moose Factory kinship was because of the land claim the Cree Nation Government made on their territory.

When I arrived in Waskaganish, people were nervous. We didn't know how many dancers would show up or if unwanted guests would come. A moose swam across the river, stopped to look at us, then swam back. It was an uplifting moment for everyone. "Our ancestors are with us," somebody said.

As dancers started lining up for the grand entry, there was still some tension in the air, but all the participants looked so proud. I certainly was. History was made when we heard the drum and we knew it. Once we

A moose swam across the river, stopped to look at us, then swam back. It was an uplifting moment for everyone. **"Our ancestors are with us,"** somebody said.

Photo © André Lemelin

started dancing, everyone felt relieved – it was finally happening and there was no turning back.

Everyone seemed to forget about the whole drama surrounding the event. I got a few stares when I was wearing my regalia at the lodge but that's it. This moment was too empowering to care about anything else. The round dance gathered a lot of people – the place was packed. Elders sure made everyone laugh with their jokes and wicked bear dance moves, and many of us, especially those from Waskaganish, felt at peace seeing this whole event was a success.

I'd be curious to know if anyone changed their mind about powwows. I noticed some were curious and came to watch a little bit, especially the kids. I know some were told not to go. Maybe they will be there next year.

Learning is sometimes a long process. Reconciliation still needs to happen within our own nation and let's hope it will happen before Waskaganish's second annual powwow.

The fact that my dad Romeo traveled from Ottawa to attend the event made my weekend even more special. Actually, he has attended every powwow I've been to, watching me dance my way to happiness. Having my family supporting me in the choices I made for myself is a blessing. We walk this path together and I embrace every second of our healing journey. It was obvious that folks were glad to see him there, as most of our leadership did not make any statement about the referendum. I can't quite understand that. We elect people expecting them to stand for our rights, don't we?

This moment was **too empowering** to care about anything else.

Reconciliation still needs to happen **within our own nation**

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What are they going to do?
Arrest us for dancing and singing?

A spiritual *nightmare*

by Ndiamon

It was a dark and stormy night in Val-d'Or when we finally rolled out, destination Waskaganish.

It had taken us more than eight hours to make our exit. First, the trailer my brother had bought required a different hitch. Then, the documents needed to pick up lumber for his new woodshed were on another vehicle in Amos so we had to drive into La Corne to retrieve them.

When we got back to Sin City we found the lumberyard closed because the power in the city had gone out. We headed north when we realized we wouldn't make it to the next gas station. Back we headed again.

We chugged into town and the first gas station we see is closed. We decided on dinner and went to Del's downtown, where we had a quick bite of spring rolls and gulps of won ton soup. We managed to get a fill-up and headed back out.

Exactly 10 kilometres later, my brother's beat-up pickup started slowing down, and down, until we rolled to a stop. It was like an episode of The Twilight Zone. Help was called and we waited in the cold and dark for our ride.

A friendly colleague finally arrived and back into Val-d'Or we went. We borrowed a truck and off we went, once again. We arrived in Matagami at 1 am and went straight to bed.

In the morning we laughed at the previous night's travails and headed to Waskaganish to see what all the fuss was about. We rolled into the reliably muddy community and went straight to Reggie Hester Park down by the Rupert River's high bank.

We were early. There were people milling about. The sellers had their wares displayed. The food sellers were still setting up and there was no hot coffee about. The dancers and drummers were ready to dance and drum. Someone excitedly mentioned that a moose had swam across the river straight for the powwow ground. If ever there was a sign that this was an Event – that was probably it.

Some background: It is alleged that the rookie Chief of Waskaganish, Darlene Cheechoo, had called powwows evil. Unfortunately for the Chief, her band council voted to support the event. The details are a bit murky but there was talk of several council members leaving the meeting in a huff.

So a referendum was hastily called just days before the event. Though few came out to vote, a bit more than half of those who did voted against the event. The people – or some of them – had spoken. Still, seeing that the law was on their side, organizers asked: What are they going to do? Arrest us for dancing and singing?

Imagine if… the police arrived and beat up the head dancer. Then they proceed to whip and strangle him in front of the howling women and children. Local firefighters with their hoses spray the gathering with freezing water. Snarling rabid German Shepherds are set loose on those fleeing the event. The Chief arrives, picks up the drum and throws it into the dying river where it sinks, never to be heard again.

Later that night, a howling wind blows in from the North as naked captives are brought before the Inquisitor and their sentences pronounced. They are to be baptised and burned at the stake even after they have confessed their sins. Much pained wailing fills that dark night in Waskaganish.

The following morning, the charred, smoldering remains of the powwow tent lay on the ground as I leave in a semi-hallucinationary state on a flight bound to historic St. Mary's City in Maryland below the Mason-Dixon Line to speak at a college. I was housed on an old plantation where slaves had toiled under a hot sun only to be beaten, raped and killed for the slightest offence by their Christian masters.

As I sat drinking one night on the mansion's veranda scanning the estate, I thought of the evil that had taken place here not so long ago. I imagined the slaves at night quietly singing and dancing to their African songs while their master, barely able to hear or understand them, lay in his soft bed quivering with fright.

on PATROL

Volunteers walk Montreal streets to protect the city's **most vulnerable**

Photo & Story
by Heather Waldron

The Wolf Pack Patrol is a volunteer-run organization started by Al Harrington, a former outreach worker for the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal, just over six months ago in response to a lack of support for the vulnerable Indigenous men and women of Montreal.

Harrington and several volunteers gather three days a week at around 8:30 pm. First, they collect donations – such as snacks, first-aid kits, sanitary items and other necessities – and then head off to patrol the streets and hand out the donations to those in need. Currently, they begin at St. George's Anglican Church, trek to Cabot Square and then all the way back, a journey that can last up to three hours.

They've become a fixture on their route, regularly stopping to chat with all the people who've become familiar with their pack.

According to a 2015 survey, 10% of Montreal's homeless population is First Nations while only 0.6% of the city's population is First Nations. Harrington hopes to eventually open a homeless shelter in Montreal to better address this issue. He says that it will be a lot of work to get it going, but he is willing to put in the time and effort.

The Wolf Pack Patrol was inspired by the Bear Clan, who began patrolling the streets in Winnipeg and are now expanding towards Western Canada. The group monitors the streets to ward off aggressors, spend time tracking down missing women while also addressing the drug problems in their community.

Harrington, an Ojibway from Shoal Lake First Nation in Ontario, chose the name Wolf Pack because Montreal is on Mohawk territory and the wolf is one of the three main clans in the Mohawk clan system. Furthermore, when he started doing research on wolves he was inspired by the way in which they look out for one another in the wild.

Harrington and the Wolf Pack Patrol have been very outspoken about the similarly named Quebec-based organization called La Meute ("The Pack"), a racist and xenophobic group that organizes and demonstrates against immigration to Canada.

This far-right group claims to be of Indigenous descent while simultaneously wanting to maintain Québécois and Canadian values. According to their Facebook page, they openly condemn multiculturalism stating that it is a threat to society in Quebec and Canada. Harrington and his volunteer group were called to Quebec City to publicly speak out against such racism at a counter-demonstration. He decreed that it is not the First Nations way to be unwelcoming and racist.

One Patrol volunteer explained that many of the vulnerable individuals they serve will only take the bare minimum so as to ensure there is enough supplies for everyone. The volunteer added that there is a lot of comradery in the streets, even though the conditions are very tough.

The Wolf Pack is currently accepting donations. They are mostly looking for socks, underwear and sanitary products. Since the winter is fast approaching, items like blankets, coats, boots, mitts, gloves, pants, sweaters and sleeping bags are also appreciated. If you would like to donate or volunteer with the Wolf Pack, you can join their Facebook group, "Wolf Pack Street Patrol", and get in contact with them there.

Many thanks to those great partners !

The Centre d'études collégiales à Chibougamau would like to thanks all the mining partners who accepted to provide internship positions to our students this summer. Those valuable work experiences will be a key asset in their upcoming career as Geology Technician.

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No prohibition

Eeyou Istchee will allow cannabis when Canada legalizes

by Jesse Staniforth

In the past 12 months, according to the Cree Health Board, more than one in four Crees have used cannabis – including more than half of Cree high school students. One in six Cree high schoolers used cannabis daily. Like alcohol in eight of the nine Cree communities, cannabis is federally outlawed, but it's not difficult to obtain.

One front in the war on drugs is ending in Canada with the legalization of cannabis this month and there are no plans to prohibit cannabis in Cree communities in the way alcohol has been banned, notes Cree Nation Government Executive Director Bill Namagoose.

"Eight of the nine communities are 'dry' – but they're not dry," said Namagoose. "Alcohol prohibition has hurt people more than it's helped them. A lot of highway deaths are attributed to trying to enforce a dry community. Alcohol prohibition hasn't worked, and obviously cannabis prohibition wouldn't work. The thing is to educate the people about how to take care of themselves."

That means on October 17, when Canada legalizes cannabis for the first time since 1923, the Cree Nation will follow, making no special bylaws to prohibit the drug.

Namagoose said the bylaw power to enact prohibition is given to the local authority, and to date, no band council has indicated an intention to prohibit cannabis consumption.

Namagoose added that cannabis appears in too many forms to try to police it. "You can smoke it, you can eat it, you can drink it," he noted. "Next thing you know it'll be cannabis beer – I guess cannabis beer will be prohibited in the Cree communities!"

In Quebec, all legal cannabis will be sold through the newly formed Société québécoise du cannabis (SQDC), which will only be opening stores in major population centres. As a result, Crees who buy legal cannabis will have to do so online for delivery by Canada Post.

Namagoose said there are psychological and medical risks associated with cannabis use, but that prohibition is not the way to address them.

"The number of youths already using cannabis is very high," he said. "Cannabis is there already. A lot of people consume alcohol, even though there's prohibition. Once it's no longer criminal, the number of criminal records for cannabis will go down – so people's livelihoods will not be affected. That's a positive thing."

The Cree Nation Government, he said, is working on an education and awareness program led by the Cree Board of Health's Public Health Service. It will inform the population of the Cree Nation about the dangers of cannabis use.

Carmen Chilton is the Board of Health and Social Service's Planning, Programming and Research Officer for Dependencies. Her team has been developing education materials about the effects of cannabis and its health risks. In part, this will involve relaying the information the Quebec and Canadian governments wish to get out about cannabis, and sharing it via radio, posters and social media.

"Providing education and awareness could help develop or strengthen an understanding of cannabis and its effects," Chilton told *the Nation*. "For example, the generation gap that exists – like some Elders could use more information on cannabis. Areas of harm reduction will be an area of focus too, like proper storage and designated smoking areas."

Cannabis is the most popular illicit substance in the Cree Nation, as it is in Canada. For those worried legalization will mean cannabis use is likely to jump, however, Chilton said research on other places that have legalized it have found there was no significant increase in use once the drug became legal.

Her goals for the Cree Nation are to help educate the public in order for Crees to make informed decisions about cannabis, and understand its potential impacts.

> ***"Education is the key.** That's what I'm concerned about—there's not enough of it going on"*
>
> *– Larry House, Coordinator, Chisasibi's Mental Wellness Team*

"Legal or not, cannabis is a psychoactive drug that can have long-term effects on wellbeing," she explained. "Developing a stronger awareness is important, and sometimes the concept of 'It's just weed' minimizes its potential negative consequences if people are abusing it – using lots, binging or using regularly."

Larry House, Coordinator of Chisasibi's Mental Wellness Team, had concerns about the potency of cannabis, which has been bred to contain increasingly higher levels of THC – the ingredient that makes a user high – in recent years.

"Personally, I've dealt with a couple of acute cases of psychosis brought on by cannabis," House said. "I don't know what it is they do with these buds, but they're more and more potent."

He was especially concerned about the new generation of cannabis ultra-concentrates (sometimes called "shatter", "dabs" or "wax"), which pack a powerful amount of THC in a small volume. Though cannabis concentrates (along with edible cannabis products) will not be federally legal until the fall of 2019, the substances are widely available on the black market. Still, House has no faith that a bylaw would prevent Crees from using cannabis or other drugs.

"Prohibition never works – it just makes the Capones get richer," he said. "Education is the key. That's what I'm concerned about; there's not enough of it going on."

Like Bill Namagoose, Nemaska Certified Addictions Specialist Wayne Rabbitskin acknowledged the potential harms of cannabis, but also pointed out that prohibition has failed to limit those harms. For Rabbitskin, the legalization of cannabis – which has already made a number of Canadians very rich – could be a benefit for the Cree Nation.

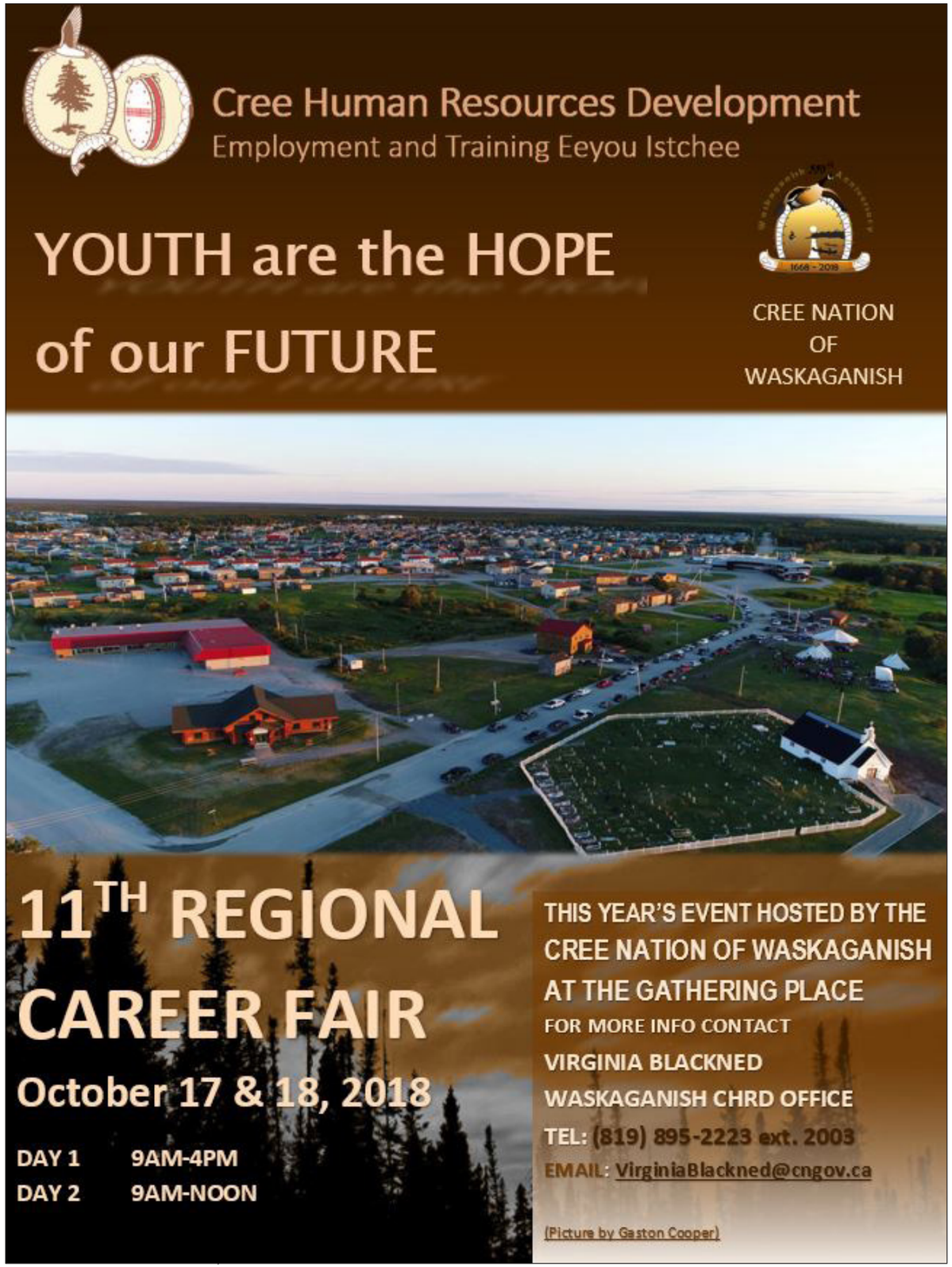
"Two or three years down the road, it'll be all normalized," Rabbitskin said. "But what I think we need to do is take the opportunity of producing this stuff, and with that money we can create programs."

Rabbitskin had a strange encounter with a Gatineau police officer recently when he was stopped for a traffic citation. The officer had worked in Whapmagoostui and was interested in developing cannabis-growing facilities in the Cree Nation, and while he was writing Rabbitskin a ticket, the two started talking about the possibilities.

"All the cannabis being produced is for medicinal purposes, for research and medicine, and it'll all be sent out to Health Canada," Rabbitskin explained. "He's looking to have maybe four to six hubs in the Cree Nation, where they produce the cannabis. We're trying to look at it – we're trying to figure out how to sell this idea in the Cree nations."

Cannabis is an intoxicant, he added, but it isn't only that. It's also potentially life-changing medicine, not just for epilepsy and multiple sclerosis, but also for nausea, pain and PTSD. For Rabbitskin, this is the most important facet of cannabis.

"Indigenous people have always emphasized the medicinal uses of cannabis, even before Europeans arrived here," he said. "This is the approach we need to consider. You look at all the medicines that healed First Nations people – traditional healing – it's all medicinal. I think this is one approach to instil the idea that this is medicine."



A silver celebration

Royal Mint releases $30 coin celebrating the fancy dance

by William East
Photo provided by McGill FPH

The Royal Canadian Mint partnered up with McGill University's First Peoples' House (FPH) September 21 to present their new limited edition silver $30 coin depicting a fancy dancer in full regalia. The Mint used the opportunity of the FPH's 17th annual powwow, which took place in a tent on the main field of the university's campus, to celebrate the coin's unveiling.

Despite pouring rain and claps of thunder, guests took their seats as the dancers prepared their elaborate outfits. The ceremony began with drumming to set the tempo, as Marc Miller, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, approached the podium.

"My secretary said I could bank on having some good weather for today," Miller quipped. "I guess the moral of the story is: don't trust the federal government."

Miller said the day was historic for a number of reasons. "Governments used to frown upon this kind of regalia," he explained. "Today is the opposite of that, we want to shine the light on the beauty, the traditions and the cultures that bring vibrance into our world."

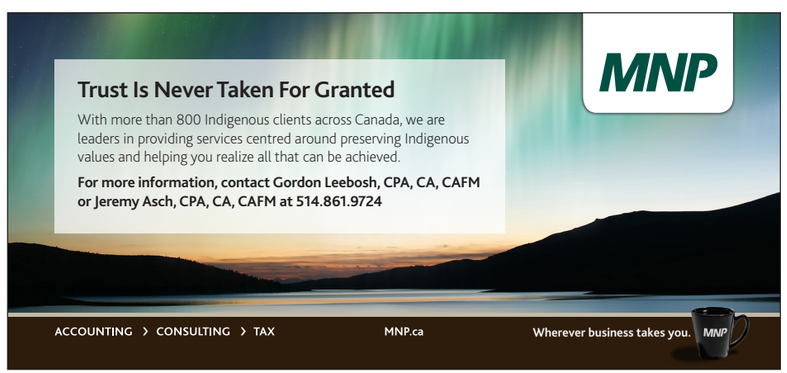
Garrison Gallow, the Mohawk artist who designed the colourful coin, talked to The Nation about the unveiling.

"This powwow is the perfect place to reveal the coin," said Gallow. "It gives Indigenous people the ability to reconnect with their culture, while also letting non-Indigenous people experience our way of life in a good light, as opposed to the negative perspective that is often presented in the media."

Hailing originally from Akwesasne, Gallow said he used the project to reconnect with the powerful forces that fancy dances create. "Whenever I do any kind of artwork with Indigenous themes, I try to get a feel of it, to express what it means to the people who would relate to it most. I'm not a fancy dancer myself, so it was wonderful to explore all the different forms of expression that make up the fancy dance. I spoke with my fancy dancer friends to understand the feeling of it, so that I could capture the energy and movement in the static coin."

Perhaps Gallow's mission exceeded his expectations – before being unveiled, the coin fell off its podium three times. "It just wants to dance!" exclaimed Ray Deer, the head veteran dancer of the Deer Family Mohawk Singers and Dancers who organizes the FPH powwow each year. After an inter-tribal dance, the coin was finally unveiled with a drum roll.

The coin itself features a mixture of engravings and colourings. It presents an assemblage of motifs, textures and traditional elements from Indigenous cultures across Canada. Don't bank on finding this 62-gram coin in your change, however – its mintage is limited to 3,500 and retails for $189.95.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A happy future

by Sonny Orr

It was the end of the 1980s when he arrived in Chisasibi. The wizened and wise Jewish man standing before us didn't look like an ordinary teacher. Perhaps a science teacher in a white trench coat might have suited his frail appearance, but he meant business in his suit. He was there to help understand not only how to make a business but to create an economic engine for our community. Our first impression was of a gracious and likeable Elder, but as soon as the ladies left the room, his raucous language came out. It was all hard-core business as we learned from this financial wizard over the next three years. We didn't learn how to make millions of dollars but we sure learned about the meaning of value of one dollar and how they added up and turned around in a local economy.

Value is perceived and not earned, we heard over and over again, with a lot of F-bombs dropped for effect. For example, the governments made us Cree money to build communities where communities didn't exist before while the average Joe down south was trying to get his cabin in the woods by a lake somewhere around us. Traditionally we had and still wanted a micro community in the bush and to live there year-round while still having the amenities of a larger community, like education and communication and so on.

Back in the day, little communities sprung up around the major hydro camps and had everything you needed. These were little outposts of the larger project but mainly supplied research information. One camp was turned into a training centre for electricians, for example. Everyone had a little space and a large cafeteria fed everyone. But that didn't build a lasting economic venture in any way.

What we learned about the economy was another matter and the wise man advised us that face value matters in the end. You get what you want for the price you want and vice versa for the seller. Then we learned marketing skills like, "If you were a man in a dark room winking at the girl you'd like to know in a room full of other men, well you gotta shine a light on yourself to even get her to notice you." And other helpful hints on selling your wares.

Credit back then was another mysterious subject he enlightened us with the saying, "You're only worth as much as the other guy thinks you are," simply because you would be using other peoples' money. "Every penny counts" was another good one. One of my favourites is, "There is no love in business".

All in all, we learned how to create a future. A future is something to work toward; a future is something that comes true. A future can be planned. The only thing stopping you from making your future work are the obstacles that always seem to get in your or our way, preventing you from your own future. Eliminate your obstacles and voilà! Your future is just as close as it's supposed to be – something to live for and to look forward to.

These lessons were part of my teachings from Elders from the south. Elders are brimming with wealthy and healthy information. Listen to gookum and joomshum more often!

> Your future is just as close as it's supposed to be – **something to live for** and to look forward to.

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Alternative Suspension

Taapwaauchaayimiisu
Believe In Yourself

OUR PROGRAM

Taapwaauyimiisu (Believe in youself) program is a resource available for the schools in the three Cree communities, where the pilot project is currently being launched . We offer support to the students' ages 12 to 17 years old who, for various reasons, are temporarily suspended from 3 to 5 days from school.

The expression ***"Believe in yourself"*** is dear to our program as we want to send a strong message of empowerment and self-worth to our youth.

OUR SERVICE SITES

Taapwaauchaayimiisu program in Mistissini has officially moved in their new service site at the Family Resource Centre (Old Youth Centre). Thank you, Cree Nation of Mistissini, for your collaboration in providing space for our youth.

We would also like to thank everyone that attended our open houses in Waskaganish and Chisasibi.

Should you require more information, please contact the coordinator.

Tel: ***(819) 527-0407***

E-mail: ***Byourself@cngov.ca***

Alternative Suspension

Department of Justice and Correctional Services, CNG

Cree School Board

Alternative Suspension

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Under the Northern Sky

Democracy is a **fragile state**

by Xavier Kataquapit

Standing up for those who are less fortunate is important. I sometimes wonder what our younger generation is doing to become aware of the politics of this country and how right-wing, well-financed movements are gaining power in provinces in Canada. Thankfully, I notice on a very local level in Kirkland Lake in Northern Ontario that secondary school students are finding the courage and the voice to protest and represent as a means to draw attention to just causes.

Kaytlyn Julien, a First Nation student at Kirkland Lake District Composite School, was one of the organizers of a walk for Orange Shirt Day September 30. The event is a legacy of the St. Joseph Mission residential school commemoration event first held in Williams Lake, British Columbia, in 2013. It grew out of the story of a young girl named Phyllis having her new orange shirt taken away from her on the first day of residential school.

These events dedicated to Phyllis now happen nationally and have become an annual opportunity to create discussion on all aspects of residential schools. The date was chosen because it is the time of year when children were taken from their homes to residential schools. It helps underpin the implementation of anti-racism and anti-bullying policies for the coming school year.

Kaytlyn and all those who organize to remember residential school survivors across Canada are to be commended. Both my mother and father were both taken by the government and placed in residential schools when they were children. I have had to live with the affects of this travesty that has carried through the generations.

This generation of young people are finding a voice and standing up for what they believe. Another example of their actions has to do with the recent protest by secondary school students in Ontario to fight against the government rollback of sex education to curriculum created more than 20 years ago. At Kirkland Lake District Composite School, the students walked out of school to protest the new Doug Ford government's decision to reverse a more enlightened sex education curriculum put forward by the past Liberal administration. I cannot believe that in this modern era we have people who want to return to a time when we kept our children in the dark with regards to sexual information.

Powerful, well-funded organizers are pushing right-wing governments all over the world. Both Quebec and Ontario recently elected such governments. I am concerned that this is happening for the most part because people are just not all that concerned about the promotion of right-wing politics. It makes me more hopeful when I hear about young people becoming educated, aware and involved in politics. I feel better about the future when I see secondary, college and university students taking a stand on issues that are facing us in terms of protecting our democracy, treating minorities fairly, providing a better quality of life for people and protecting our environment.

In the 1930s one of the most brilliant, progressive and intelligent societies in Germany was bullied and manipulated by right-wing thugs backed by wealthy and powerful people to become fascist. As filmmaker Michael Moore points out in his movie Fahrenheit 11/9, what happened in the 1930s with the Nazi movement can and is happening again today. It is up to us all to become more aware of what is happening to us politically, discover who is pulling the strings and doing the manipulation and to organize and fight back.

A lot of this energy and effort must come from our secondary, college and university students who can help fuel a renewed commitment to democracy and fairness for all. It is really up to us all and if we choose to ignore what is happening around us and become apathetic then we might be very surprised when the jackboots come marching our way again.

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